

# BEYOND TEXTBOOKS

<http://lwbva.org/beyondtextbooks.cfm>



Good instructional media, including textbooks, are essential to schools. A new initiative explores ways to combine the best attributes of traditional and contemporary educational media.

The Commonwealth of Virginia spent approximately \$79.3 million on textbooks during the 2009-10 school year. Despite this investment, many textbooks inadequately address the needs of students and teachers. Outdated information is common due to the nature of textbook adoption cycles, and the information is often ill suited to curricula and assessments. Textbooks also are becoming increasingly inapt for today's learners. They often fail to engage students, and the books' size, weight, and static nature stand in stark contrast to the small, powerful, mobile devices students carry in their pockets. New textbook models are needed.

The Virginia Department of Education, with support from the Governor's Productivity Investment Fund, is implementing the small-scale pilot program *Beyond Textbooks* to explore the technical, social, and policy implications of textbook alternatives. This project identifies cost-effective models that blend the vetted, standards-based content and convenience of traditional textbooks with the engaging, dynamic, up-to-date content and resources afforded by the Web. Specifically, it examines new ways to access, organize, and deliver high-quality content using various platforms and tools, including the Apple iPad, and to understand the conditions necessary for successful implementation in schools.

Textbook publishers, other instructional content providers, and technology companies may participate in this initiative by granting the Department of Education permission to use their content and tools to better understand the production and delivery of instructional media. Content providers retain all rights to the content. Of particular interest are the publications and supporting resources in the 2009 *Recommended History and Social Science Textbook and Instructional Materials*, adopted by the Virginia Board of Education on March 18, 2010. The results from this project likely will benefit all content providers in shaping future digital instructional media development, educators as they integrate these new resources into schools, and policymakers as they consider legislation and regulations that impact the acquisition of educational resources for schools.

## Project Goals

The goals of *Beyond Textbooks* are to

- Understand the technical, social, and policy implications of replacing traditional textbooks with digital alternatives
- Understand the conditions necessary for delivering high-quality instructional materials for a lower investment
- Understand how digital instructional materials can be used most effectively to increase student engagement and educational outcomes
- Understand how digital instructional materials can be used most effectively to improve teacher practice

## Summary of Current Activities

### *AP Biology*

Virtual Virginia students will be engaged in the project in fall 2010 through AP Biology. One-third will be assigned the traditional print-based text and supporting materials, another third will use a Web-based

version, and the remaining third will receive a version on the iPad via Inkling, a new software platform for rich, interactive learning content. Inkling puts interactive learning content into the hands of students, increasing engagement, and giving teachers insights into student behavior. Embedded video, interactive assessment, and high resolution media engage students. Social note sharing brings students and teachers together in new ways to collaborate and achieve.

#### *World History I and U.S. History II*

Students in Pulaski, Newport News, and Arlington will use instructional materials developed by Pearson for this project. The Pearson pilot will run from November 1, 2010, to February 4, 2011, and aims to engage students, help them master core content, and personalize learning. It will feature an e-text and supporting apps delivered via the iPad. An engagement app will provide gaming activities connected to Virginia's Essential Questions. The assessment app provides quick study and vocabulary review and uses questions based on SOL test data. The app scores student performance and offers a personalized recommendation for extension or review based on the student's performance.

For participating middle schools, the content will be based on the Virginia edition of *America: History of Our Nation: 1865 to the Present*, chapters 17-22. Participating high schools will use the Virginia edition of *World History: Volume I*, chapters 7-12. Engagement, instruction, and assessment are at the center of this new form for digital delivery of content.

#### *Jamestown*

Jamestown is the focus of two projects. Students in Henry and Arlington counties will be able to personalize their studies of Jamestown through an engaging, media-rich presentation delivered via the iPad and built by Victory Productions using a new technology that expands the traditional print layout and design capabilities of Adobe InDesign. This project utilizes the resources of the print version of the Five Ponds Press text *Our Virginia: Past & Present*. The features include a Spanish translation of the student text, alternate student text at a lower reading level, and embedded assessments. This effort will offer an interesting model of how activities and lessons in a teacher edition of a text can be embedded directly into the student edition.

The second Jamestown project presents the resources of the print version of *Our Virginia: Past & Present* using a robust content-creation and delivery platform provided by MashON. Students can access the same digital assets used in assembling the text—narrative, video, audio, images, etc.—to create projects that demonstrate their content comprehension. They can upload their own digital assets or access a digital library provided by the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation featuring the sights and sounds of Jamestown Settlement. Language translation tools enable students to translate the text to other languages by simply moving the mouse over a text box, and a suite of tools helps teachers design, manage, and share lessons.

### **Preparing for *Beyond Textbooks***

Teachers, instructional technology resource teachers, and technology support staff will be trained prior to the introduction of *Beyond Textbooks* in classrooms in fall 2010. Schools must complete a readiness checklist to ensure they have the infrastructure and support needed for successful deployment.

A research plan has been developed to ensure the project focuses on the key questions that must be answered. Additional partners and new focus areas will be added as the project progresses.



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